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S E C R E T TAIPEI 003294

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE EXPLAINS SUBTLE MESSAGE IN TSU SPEECH

REF: TAIPEI 3240

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (S) President Chen Shui-bian spoke to the fourth anniversary of the Taiwan Solidarity Union August 6 (reported septel),echoing many of the themes he sounded in his remarks to the Formosa Foundation on August 2 (reftel). Presidential Office Deputy Secretary General James Huang called AIT DDIR the evening of August 6, saying that he was calling at the instruction of President Chen to inform the U.S. of the intent of his speech to the TSU Fourth Anniversary that day to avoid the possibility of any misreading.

2. (S) He stressed that the intent of the speech was:

1. The presentation of the Four Stages of the Republic of China was a "subtle way" to counter Lee Teng-hui's statement that the ROC no longer exists.;

2. Since the ROC exists, this was a "subtle way" for Chen to insist that there is no need to establish a new constitution or change the name of the country.

3. CSB made it clear that he did not foreclose any option regarding Taiwan's future, including reunification with China, provided it was in accordance with the principle of public sovereignty (zhu-quan zai min) and self determination (gong-min zi-jue).

3. (S) This means, Huang explained, that Chen, unlike Taiwan independence advocates or fundamentalists who favor permanent separation from China, is willing to consider a future that includes the possibility of reunification with the mainland. DDIR promised to convey this message to Washington.

4. (S) Despite these gestures to Taiwan identity and the sympathies of the TSU, Chen's speech received a decidedly tepid reaction from the TSU faithful at the event, who a few moments later enthusiastically cheered President Lee's more clearly fundamentalist message. The editorial in the Monday edition of the pro-independence Liberty Times confirmed the verdict of the TSU faithful. It noted that President Chen and Premier Frank Hsieh have abandoned any advocacy of making a new constitution or new name for Taiwan. Ever since Chen met with James Soong in February, he has begun to advocate the three and then the four stage history of the ROC and Taiwan. His advocacy of the theory that "the Republic of China" is Taiwan makes Taiwan the loser and is so much "claptrap."

5. (S) The Chinese text of Chen's speech published on the President's Office website the next day does include twice the statement that any future course is possible for Taiwan is possible so long as the 23 million people, who have sovereignty over Taiwan, agree. Neither time, however, does Chen say that reunification is one possible future course. While Chen may have intended to emphasize the importance of "the Republic of China," it is remarkable that on almost every occasion where the word "country" or "sovereignty" appears, the country is called "Taiwan." This emphasis is less remarkable for someone accustomed to the President's rhetoric over the last few years. He has repeatedly used the term "ROC" just enough to insist that he is protecting the status quo. While Chen clearly failed to win the hearts of the TSU speech with this speech, it offers equally little solace to those urging Chen to steer a predictable centrist course that will enhance peace and stability.

PAAL